

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, VE
SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN REACTION TO NEW YORK TIMES
STORY ACCUSING PRESIDENT PEREZ OF RECEIVING
MONEY FROM THE CIA

REF: CARACAS 1807

1. SUMMARY. NATIONAL REACTION AS REFLECTED IN THE PRESS TO NEW YORK TIMES STORY ACCUSING PRESIDENT PEREZ OF HAVING RECEIVED MONEY FROM THE CIA WHILE HE WAS MINISTER OF INTERIOR (1962-1963) IS ENERGETIC, ALMOST VIOLENT, AND FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF PRESIDENT PEREZ' INNOCENCE. FURTHER, THE USG IS HELD DIRECTLY ACCOUNTABLE FOR WHAT IS CONSIDERED A SMEAR AGAINST VENEZUELA IN RETALIATION FOR ITS NATIONALIST, INDEPENDENT AND THIRD WORLD FOREIGN POLICY. END SUMMARY.
 2. PRESIDENT PEREZ ISSUED AN EXTRAORDINARILY TOUGH STATEMENT FEBRUARY 20 WHICH IS HEADLINED AND FRONT-PAGED IN FEBRUARY 21 DAILIES (SEE REFTEL). PRESIDENT DENIES HAVING RECEIVED MONEY FROM THE CIA CATEGORICALLY, STATES STORY COULD ONLY BE PART OF A PLOT TO ATTACK
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HIM BECAUSE OF HIS FORTHRIGHT DEFENSE OF VENEZUELA'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND INTERESTS AND HIS TOUGH POSTURE IN OPEC AND IN THE NORTH/SOUTH DIALOGUE. PRESIDENT ASSERTS STORY COULD NOT HAVE SURFACED WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIGH LEVELS OF USG AND DEMANDS THAT THE USG DENY IT.

3. MORNING PRESS ALSO HEADLINES FACT THAT AMBASSADOR SUMMONED URGENTLY TO FOREIGN MINISTRY FEBRUARY 20, AND THAT VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT ASKED FOR A "COMPLETE CLARIFICATION" OF THIS "FALSE" STORY.

4. FORMER PRESIDENT BETANCOURT, WHO ALTHOUGH A MEMBER OF PRESIDENT PEREZ' POLITICAL PARTY, IS THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS LIVING PUBLIC FIGURE IN VENEZUELA, ISSUED A STRONG WRITTEN STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT PEREZ, DENYING THAT THE LATTER, WHILE A MEMBER OF HIS GOVERNMENT OR AT ANY TIME, RECEIVED MONEY FROM THE CIA FOR ANY PURPOSE. PRESIDENT BETANCOURT'S STATEMENT ENDS AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE I AM INFORMED THAT THE GOV HAS ADOPTED AN ENERGETIC ATTITUDE IN THE FACE OF THIS SITUATION. WHATEVER THE DECISION WHICH IS FINALLY ADOPTED BY OUR GOVERNMENT, IT SHOULD HAVE THE SUPPORT OF ALL VENEZUELAN UNQUOTE.

5. SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT PEREZ ON THE PART OF OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES SPANS THE ENTIRE RANGE OF PERSUASIONS, INCLUDING THE EXTREME LEFT. LEADERS OF ALL PARTIES EXCEPT COPEI, THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY WHICH IS NOW PREPARING A STATEMENT, SOLIDLY AND CATEGORICALLY REPUDIATE THE ACCUSATIONS MADE AGAINST THE PRESIDENT ECHOING THE GOVERNMENT'S ARGUMENT THAT THIS IS IN RETALIATION FOR THE PRESIDENT'S FIRM AND NATIONALISTIC FOREIGN POLICY.

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6. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT THE NEW YORK TIMES STORY HAS RELEASED A STORM OF OUTRAGE ON THE PART OF MOST SECTORS OF PUBLIC OPINION. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT THE TARGET OF THIS RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION IS THE USG ITSELF. THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE CLEAR THAT HE PUBLICLY HOLDS THE USG DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE AND EXPECTS IT TO EXONERATE HIM.
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Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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